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Social Workers and Battered Women: A Study of Professional Beliefs

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SOCIAL WORKERS AND BATTERED WOMEN:
A STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL BELIEFS

TIMOTHY MOE

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Work

AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

2000

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated
to the women and children of this world
who experience violence at the
hands of their loved-ones.

May they find peace.

You will guard your wife s honour
and be not her master, but her true friend.
You will hold her body and her soul as sacred.

-Gandhi

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all those days when I was in school, especially
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For all these people, I am grateful

ABSTRACT

SOCIAL WORKERS AND BATTERED WOMEN: A STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL BELIEFS

A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

TIMOTHY M. MOE

APRIL 1, 2000

This quantitative study explored the beliefs of child protection social workers in regard to battered women and domestic violence. A self-administered, mailed survey was used to gather information on some of the key beliefs that have been identified in the literature. In general, prior studies show that social workers stereotype battered women and respond to their needs in a manner that is insensitive or inappropriate.

Surveys were mailed to all 68 child protection workers in the North Central Region of Wisconsin. The region is composed of 15 counties; each county employs social workers who perform child protection duties. Forty-six surveys were returned, resulting in a response rate of 67%.

The results indicate that social workers have become less stereotypical of battered women and are more willing to intervene in cases of domestic violence. However, some negative beliefs still exist, indicating a need for continuing education and training.

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INTRODUCTION

The field of Social Work continues to encounter new challenges to old problems. The battering of women has long been recognized as a problem requiring social work intervention (Gordon, 1988; Edleson, 1991), but we have only recently begun to examine the usefulness of our approach and the extent of the problem in our work (Davis & Hagan, 1992; Edleson, 1999; Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996; Gondolf, 1988; Magen, Conroy, McCart Hess, Panciera, & Simon, 1995; Ross & Glisson, 1991; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). Additionally, we are beginning to understand that the problem of woman battering cannot be isolated and left to specialists. A wide range of human service professionals encounter this phenomenon on a regular basis and, therefore, must be prepared to assess and confront it (Davis & Hagan, 1992; Feldhaus, Koziol-McLain, Amsbury, Norton, Lowenstien, & Abbott, 1997; Hamlin, 1991; Mills, 1996; Schechter & Edleson, 1994).

Background of the Problem

Researchers have explored the problem of woman battering from a number of different angles (Brookoff, O Brian, Cook, Thompson & Williams, 1997; Bowker, Arbitell & McFerron, 1988; Davis, 1987; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gelles & Straus, 1988). As a result, we know that a substantial number of American families experience this problem. According to the work of Straus and Gelles (1990), about 2 million American adult women suffer from partner violence each year. In connection to this, about 3.3 million children witness this type of violence in their homes (Carlson, 1984). An increasing body of research is demonstrating that the witnessing of parental violence has a strong negative impact on children (Berman, 1993; Schechter & Edleson, 1994).

Studies also show that there is a close connection between woman abuse and child abuse. In fact, it appears that among families where child abuse is present, 30% to 60% of

those families also experience abuse toward adult women (Hughes, 1988; Petchers, 1995; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). The severity of abuse is also related in these cases. In other words, as violence escalates toward the woman, it also increases toward the children (Bowker, Arbitell, & McFerron, 1998). Often, abuse toward children occurs when they try to protect their mothers from the battering male (Brookoff, O Brian, Cook, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). Consequently, violence toward women is a problem that should be of substantial concern to all types of social workers, especially those working in child protective services (CPS). CPS workers should have an accurate understanding of the process of battering and the multiple needs of battered women. This will allow them to conduct appropriate family assessments and intervene in a manner that addresses the safety of both women and children.

Research Question

This study explores the beliefs of professional social workers in regard to domestic violence. The research question is as follows: What are the beliefs of social workers in regard to battered women and domestic violence?

Significance of the Study

In recent history, social workers have generally responded poorly to the needs of battered women. This is due, in part, to the stereotypes that social workers have held regarding this population (Ross & Glisson, 1991). It is also due to the fact that social workers have received minimal training around domestic violence interventions (Gondolf, 1988).

The state of Wisconsin is beginning to encourage collaboration between child protection and domestic violence agencies. The findings from this study can assist in that effort by identifying current barriers that relate to the attitudes and beliefs of social

workers. The study also contributes to the profession by identifying the presence of ongoing problems that need to be addressed through training, education, and additional research.

Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a general introduction for this project. In chapter 2, I will provide a review of the relevant literature. It will focus on a broad area of issues related to domestic violence, battered women and the social work profession. In chapter 3, the methodology section, I will provide an outline of the steps that will be taken in conducting the research. In chapter 4, I will present the research findings and in chapter 5 I will provide a discussion about the findings and briefly review implications for the social work profession and future research.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review is designed to provide a general outline of the social work connection to battered women and domestic violence. Following some introductory definitions, I will begin by reviewing some historical issues. Next, I will review some of the needs and perceptions of victims in relation to social workers. Third, I will outline some of the studies specifically focusing on the attitudes, beliefs and approaches of social workers in dealing with cases of domestic violence. Fourth, I will explain the literature that relates to appropriate social work intervention with battered women. Finally, I will outline the theoretical framework that is used to guide this study.

Definitions

In this project I will use Edleson's (1991) definition of woman battering: any physical act of violence directed at a woman by her intimate male partner (p. 305). The terms woman battering, domestic violence, woman abuse, and partner violence will be used interchangeably. Domestic violence will not be used to refer to the maltreatment of children. Abuse involving children will simply be referred to as child abuse.

Historical Factors

The problem of violence toward women gained national attention in the 1970s. But scholars have shown that the problem has a much longer connection to the field of social work. An historical study by Gordon in 1988 revealed that social workers have played a key role in the provision of services to battered women for over a century. In a study of family service archives, Edleson (1991) had similar findings. He concluded that battering has long been a recognized problem, ... and has historically been the subject of social workers' intervention efforts (p. 304).

Since the 1870s, state laws and policies have allowed social workers to act for the

protection of children. However, the same authority has not been given for cases of violence toward women. The only authority in this realm has been given to police (Gordon, 1988). Nonetheless, social workers have often understood that women and children have common interests in regard to safety. Therefore, they have responded to the needs of battered women in a variety of ways (Edleson, 1991).

Over time, the approach of social workers seems to have gone through various phases of change. Early in the century, social workers generally relied on very practical and concrete interventions (Edleson, 1991). They assisted women in accessing basic services, such as legal advice, financial assistance, and resources for food and shelter.

Starting in the 1930s, the field became more specialized and developed a more clinical focus. Child protection workers, lacking any legal authority with batterers, focused more strictly on the needs of children, separating marital problems from child welfare concerns (Gordon, 1988, p. 283). When they could not ignore the presence of battering, caseworkers... began to define it as a problem for the woman to work on (Gordon, p. 281). Consequently, they started encouraging women to seek mental health services. Thus, the problem began to be viewed in terms of an individual's mental health, focusing on the woman and her need to be treated.

This treatment approach continued to be prominent until the 1970s, when the women's movement redefined women abuse as a social problem (Davis, 1987; Gordon, 1988). Feminists recognized that woman abuse was impacting a large and diverse group of women. Further, they pointed out that the American social, economic, and political structure is oppressive toward women and specific acts of violence occur within this context. Therefore, they argued that individual acts of battering cannot be isolated from the larger issues of male power and control (Davis, 1987).

Toward the end of the 1970s, social workers were beginning to support this definition and to outline new methods and theories for responding (Bass & Rice, 1979; McShane, 1979; Nichols, 1976). This period witnessed the growth of the shelter movement and a wide variety of community services designed specifically for battered women (Davis, 1987). During the past 20 years, however, an ongoing debate still occurs regarding the most appropriate methods of intervention. This debate has both philosophical and political components (Davis, 1987; Forte, Franks, Forte, & Rigsby, 1997; Gordon, 1988; Hansen, 1993).

Many social workers and therapists continue to advocate family treatment models (for the victim and perpetrator), viewing the problem within the context of family systems theory (Giles-Sims, 1983; Hansen & Goldenberg, 1993; Taylor, 1984; Weidman, 1986; Weitzman & Dreen, 1982). The general argument is that battering occurs in the context of a problematic relationship. There is no specific victim; both the man and woman are seen as provoking and perpetuating the violence (Scarf, 1992).

The systems approach can be especially controversial if the model encourages men and women to engage in couples therapy. In this regard, Golden and Frank (1994) have argued that joint counseling places the woman in a highly vulnerable situation. In fact, they believe it may increase the risk of violence and further alienate the woman.

Many scholars take a feminist approach, explaining violence toward women as a social problem requiring changes in the economic and social structure (Davis & Hagan, 1992; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllo, 1993). More recently, scholars and practitioners are trying to bring these two approaches together (Gondolf, 1988; Morell, 1987). In addition, there is a new movement aimed at getting child protection agencies refocused on the connection between child abuse and woman abuse (Berman, 1993; Edleson, 1999;

Magan et al., 1995; Schechter & Edleson, 1994; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). Thus, social work practice continues to evolve and grow around this issue.

The Needs and Perceptions of Victims

Several recent studies have attempted to examine the needs of battered women and their perceptions of service providers. In general, these studies are qualitative, involving intensive interviewing. Most of the studies in this review had small sample groups; therefore, they are open to some criticism. However, they seem to point out some important issues for social work intervention.

Social workers tend to approach battered women in the same manner as all other clients (Bass & Rice, 1979; Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996). They see the problems of this group in very concrete terms and focus on simple, linear solutions. For instance, if a woman has been abused by her partner, social workers have often advocated ending the relationship as the only solution. This approach places battered women into a very narrow category. Conversely, research shows that battered women often have very different and distinct needs. Occasionally, these needs can seem contradictory. Therefore, practitioners need to be flexible and sensitive in their approach. Social workers cannot assume that general practice methods will work with this population (Gondolf, 1988).

Battered women have a clear need for practical and concrete services (Davis & Srnivasan, 1995; Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996; Gondolf, 1988). They need information about programs, resources, and other forms of basic assistance. They also need knowledge of basic safety planning. In a study completed in 1995, Davis and Srnivasan found that many battered women do not even have knowledge of local shelters. In the midst of ongoing violence, such information can be critical.

Basic physical protection is a need shared by many battered women (Register,

1993). An on-scene study conducted in Memphis demonstrated that most victims will call the police before any other service provider (Brookoff, O Brian, Cook, Thompson & Williams, 1997). Contacting the police can provide a very immediate intervention that may remove the abuser and restore some sense of safety. This tends to be a temporary solution, but one that can seem real and necessary. It is similar to the use of emergency room services. Several studies have shown that victims will often go to hospital emergency departments for immediate safety (Feldhaus, Kozial-McLain, Amsbury, Norton, Lowenstein & Abbott, 1997; McFarlane, Greenberg, Weltage, & Watson, 1995; Abbott, Johnson, Koziol-McLain, & Lowenstein, 1995). In such a situation, they can receive temporary protection and assistance without having to make disclosures about the abuse.

Beyond the need for basic safety and services, battered women have a strong need for emotional support and validation (Register, 1993; Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996; Fiene, 1995). They need to have their stories heard and believed. Furthermore, they need to know that their experience is not isolated or unreal. In their qualitative study of women in shelters, Davis and Srivivasan (1995) found that practitioners can have an important impact in the lives of battered women by simply listening to their concerns and being available to assist them with their needs.

Research also shows that battered women need services that support their right to self-determination. They need to be supported in their decision-making, even if this includes the decision to return to the abuser (Register, 1993; Davis & Srivivasan, 1995). Too often, professionals see this decision as a failure and, in turn, remove themselves from providing future support (Loseke & Cahill, 1984). Social workers who fail to encourage self-determination are seen as controlling and insensitive, characteristics similar

to those of the batterer (Davis & Srivivasan, 1995).

In sharp contrast to the need for support and empowerment, Eisikovits and Buchbinder (1996) found that battered women need social workers to be directive and assertive (this appears to be a contradiction in the literature, but it is also indicative of the diversity among victims). In their study, women said that they needed their social workers to take a stand against the violence and give them some concrete direction to guide their decision making (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996). When social workers simply listened and left all decision-making to the woman, this was perceived as passivity, neutrality, and disinterest (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996). This led to problems in the working relationship and general distrust on the part of the victim. Quite clearly, these women wanted their workers to address and confront the violence, even to the point of confronting the abuser directly. When social workers failed to do this, they were seen as validating the perpetrator rather than the victim. This led victims toward increased feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Another area that is identified in the research is the need for service providers to be honest and candid about the abuse. Studies show that women need social workers to recognize the abuse, even if the woman hesitates to disclose (Feine, 1995; Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996). Addressing the abuse openly leads to increased trust and gives the message that the practitioner recognizes and supports the woman's need for safety.

Thus, battered women have a wide variety of needs and they cannot always be arranged into neat categories. As demonstrated by the research, their needs may even be contradictory. This is one of the things that sets this population apart from other social work clients. As a result, social workers must approach this population with flexibility and a willingness to be open to various methods and approaches.

Attitudes and Beliefs of Social Workers

Social workers need a variety of skills if they are to intervene appropriately with battered woman. However, studies show that social workers have typically used improper interventions or failed to intervene altogether (Bass & Rice, 1979; Davis & Carlson, 1981; Harway & Hansen, 1993; Nichols, 1976). This has been true, whether the worker is a caseworker, therapist, or other service provider (Davis, 1984; Ross & Glisson, 1991).

Several studies demonstrate that personal attitudes and beliefs directly impact the professional's method of intervention (Davis, 1984; Davis & Carlson, 1981; Ross and Glisson, 1991). Social workers have been found to stereotype battered women, seeing them as masochistic, provocative, and domineering (Ross & Glisson, 1991; Walker, 1981). These stereotypes are even more pronounced when the women are poor (Ross & Glisson, 1991). This leads to interventions that are focused on the victim rather than the perpetrator (Bass & Rice, 1979).

Quite often, social workers believe that battered woman should be treated through psychotherapy (Bass & Rice, 1979; Davis, 1984; Davis & Carlson, 1981; Hansen, 1993). In fact, Davis (1984) found that social workers, in comparison to other service providers, are the most likely to recommend counseling for battered women (suggesting that the woman has some type of behavior that should change). Furthermore, a substantial number of social workers suggest couples counseling. This occurs, despite the possibility that couple counseling may substantially increase the risk of violence toward the woman (Golden & Frank, 1994).

In addition to stereotyping battered women, social workers often engage in the practice of blaming the woman for the abuse (Davis & Carlson, 1981; Hilberman, 1980;

Loseke & Cahill, 1984). This can happen directly, through statements that blame the woman for provoking abuse or choosing violent partners. It can also happen indirectly, with service interventions that primarily target the behavior of the battered woman. By responding in this manner, the underlying message from the social worker is that the woman (rather than the violent male) is the problem that must be changed. Through research, this response has been observed in assessments which focus on the character and behavior of victims (Harway & Hansen, 1993). It is also seen quite clearly in the data obtained by direct question surveys (Bass & Rice, 1979; Davis & Carlson, 1981; Ross & Glisson, 1991).

Battered women have voiced concern that social workers fail to recognize or address the violence in their relationship (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996). Research appears to support this perception. Harway and Hansen (1993) found that social workers (at all levels of education) fail to address violence directly. Instead, they tend to focus on other relationship issues, such as communication and cooperation (Nichols, 1979; Bass & Rice, 1979; Harway & Hansen, 1993). By ignoring the violence, social workers fail to recognize the woman's primary need for safety (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Harway & Hansen, 1993). This can actually increase the risk of abuse, rather than help prevent it (McShane, 1979; Bass & Rice, 1979). It also gives the message that the abuse and the woman's safety are unimportant to the worker (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996).

In order for social workers to respond appropriately, they first need to have knowledge of the full range of community resources (Gondolf, 1988). However, several studies demonstrate that social workers lack this knowledge (Bass & Rice, 1979; Gondolf, 1988; Ross & Glisson, 1991). This occurs, in part, because the system of social services is fragmented and communication is poor (Davis, 1984; Gondolf, 1988). Social work

agencies have had the tendency to work in isolation, rather than cooperate actively with agencies that provide domestic violence services (Hamlin, 1991; Schechter & Edleson, 1994). This is not simply a criticism of these agencies; it appears to be a systemic problem. Nonetheless, the fragmentation generally leaves battered women without the services they need, even if the services are available.

Some additional research findings are also interesting to note. Ross and Glisson (1991) found that social workers are less likely to suggest leaving the abuser if the woman is married. This lends support to the criticism that social workers are interested in the stability of the family, above all else. In addition, they found that the level of violence needs to be high in order for social workers to justify any type of intervention on behalf of the woman.

In contrast to what might be expected, Davis and Carlson (1981) found very few differences in the responses of male versus female social workers. In general, the findings of Ross and Glisson (1991) supported this; however, they found that male social workers were more likely to focus attention on violence-related concerns (p. 100).

In terms of educational level, Davis and Carlson (1981) noted some significant differences. They found that increased education improves the likelihood of a more appropriate assessment. They also found that attitudes and beliefs have a direct relationship to the worker's specific duties within the field. Harway and Hansen (1993) did not find significant differences in terms of educational background. They found responses to generally be the same, whether the social worker had a masters or bachelors degree.

Appropriate Social Work Intervention

Based on a review of the literature, we know that social workers have often failed

to respond appropriately to battered women. They have failed to openly address the violence (Harway & Hansen, 1993), relied on inadequate interventions (Davis, 1984), lacked knowledge of resources (Bass & Rice, 1979), and generally contributed to the fragmentation of the service delivery system (Hamlin, 1991). In the end, battered women have not received the assistance necessary to stop the violence and move toward a more healthy life.

Gondolf (1988) outlines several key elements that must be present in the system of social services. For the purpose of this study, we will primarily focus on the elements that relate directly to county social workers. First, the system must be coordinated and integrated across disciplines. Service providers from all agencies must be able to communicate and work together. This includes individuals such as social workers, physicians, police officers and advocates. Rather than continuing to work in isolation and competition, these individuals must work together to develop a coordinated response (Schechter & Edleson, 1994). This is the only way to ensure that women receive both immediate crisis intervention and long-term social supports (Gondolf, 1988). As Gondolf (1988) explains, domestic violence must be seen as a community problem (p. 104). It is absurd to assume that shelters can serve all the needs of battered women.

Second, social workers must become knowledgeable of the services and resources in their communities. Battered women need to have awareness of these resources and should be informed about how to access them. Social workers play a key role in ensuring that this knowledge is conveyed to the women who need it.

Third, social workers need to use intervention strategies that focus on both short- and long-term needs (Register, 1993; Gondolf, 1988). Addressing safety is an immediate concern. However, once a safety plan is developed, a variety of ongoing supports and

alternatives should be reviewed and provided. Even if women do not want to receive all services, social workers should educate them on the full range of options. Studies have shown that such knowledge contributes to the woman's ability to move toward safety and independence (Gondolf, 1988; Davis & Hagan, 1992).

A fourth element involves the importance of self-determination. Social workers must rely on interventions that seek to empower women (Register, 1993). This includes using cooperative problem-solving methods. Women should be seen as possessing a variety of strengths and being capable of making personal decisions and choices. In addition, social workers should understand their role as working *with* the battered woman rather than treating or managing her. Methods of social control are generally ineffective with battered women (Gelles & Straus, 1988); furthermore, this approach simply perpetuates the perpetrator-victim arrangement.

Finally, social workers must demonstrate a more appropriate response to women who return to the abuser. Quite frequently, professionals have viewed the woman who returns or remains as deviant: her competence is called into question if she does not leave. She is defined as a type of person who is unable to manage her own affairs (Loseke & Cahill, 1984, p. 306). In addition, she may be seen as approving of the abuse or provoking it. This perception leads the social worker to overemphasize the woman's behavior and minimize the impact of the abuse. Moreover, it fails to recognize that battering is a long-term process that requires equally long-term solutions (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983). In order to respond appropriately, social workers should be supportive of the woman's choices and be willing to offer support, whether or not the woman remains in the relationship (Mills, 1996).

In summary, it is clear that the social work profession needs increased awareness

of the issues and dynamics surrounding domestic violence. If social workers are going to improve their level of assessment and intervention, training will be necessary. In addition, each worker must be willing to closely examine his or her attitudes and beliefs about family violence and its victims.

Gaps in the Literature

Several prior studies have attempted to determine the attitudes and beliefs of social workers in regard to domestic violence and its victims. However, all of these studies have looked at a wide range of social work professionals, from caseworkers to therapists. In turn, comparisons are made between groups. For instance, hospital social workers have been compared to family therapists or professionals from a variety of agencies (Bass & Rice, 1979; Ross & Glisson, 1991). Moreover, this cluster of social workers may be compared to other professionals, such as doctors or police officers (Davis, 1984). None of these studies have accounted for the fact that each professional subgroup confronts domestic violence in a different context and manner.

This study differs from the previous research by focusing on a specific group: county child protection workers. This group of professionals is an appropriate target for study because we know that they regularly see and assess violent families. By controlling for occupational variety, we can make some internal comparisons. For example, we can gain a better idea about how experience and educational level may impact beliefs. Thus, this research is able to fill some of the gaps that have been left by previous research.

Theoretical Framework

Theories that explain domestic violence generally come from psychological, social or feminist perspectives (Gelles & Loseke, 1993). This study uses feminist theory to provide a theoretical foundation. Within this framework, the following concepts are

important:

1. Gender and power are key elements in domestic violence (Yllo, 1993, p. 48).
2. Woman battering is a social rather than a psychological problem.
3. Concepts about battered women are socially constructed.

These concepts, described below, will guide the process of data gathering and analysis.

Gender and Power

Although some would disagree (Straus, 1993; Steinmetz & Lucca, 1988), domestic violence is a problem of violence toward women. The evidence indicates that the overwhelming majority of assaults in intimate relationships are directed toward women (Kurz, 1993). Furthermore, women are the victims of the most severe acts of violence (Berk, Berk, Loseke & Rauma, 1983). Thus, the role of gender cannot be ignored and we should understand that domestic violence is not a gender neutral problem (Yllo, 1993).

The role of male power and control must also be understood. The feminist perspective defines the American social structure as essentially patriarchal; men and women do not hold equal status. Men are in a position of power, dominating the political, economic and social structure. Violence against women is ultimately condoned as it perpetuates this male dominated system by keeping women in a subordinate position. When a man abuses his wife, he is committing an act that is both political and individual. The act is not isolated; it occurs within a larger context of male power (Yllo, 1993).

Social vs. Psychological Problem

A second tenet of feminism is that woman battering is a social rather than a psychological problem (Bowker, 1993; Davis & Hagan, 1992; Nichols, 1976). Many would contend that women are battered due to certain character flaws or psychological deficiencies (in the male perpetrator or female victim). In this view, the problem is

essentially individualistic. Therefore, the solution falls in the realm of individual treatment: if the individual is treated, the violence will end (Gondolf, 1988).

It is interesting to note that individual problems are viewed differently, based on gender. In the case of male perpetrators, violence is often excused because of the psychological problems associated with low self-esteem, poor impulse control, alcoholism, or a traumatic childhood (Yllo, 1993, p. 59). In contrast, women's psychological problems have been seen as the cause of their victimization (Yllo, p. 59). In this view, women are abused because they are dependent, provocative, or masochistic. Thus, the psychological explanation results in blaming women and excusing men.

Feminists believe that this view is reductionistic and, in turn, they advocate for a social perspective. As mentioned above, feminist theory states that battering occurs in the context of male dominance and patriarchy. Thus, even if individuals are treated, the problem will not be resolved. Domestic violence will only end when fundamental changes are made in the economic and political structure. This involves a process of changes in policy, law making and law enforcement.

Social Construction

Within the social context of patriarchy, ideas about battered women are socially constructed. Battered women have been defined as helpless, provocative, dependent and unable to make healthy decisions about their safety (Forte et al., 1996; Walker, 1979). Over time, this has led to the creation of a categorical identity for battered women (Loseke & Cahill, 1984, p. 306). It has also led to the practice of viewing battered women only through their status as victim (Loseke & Cahill, 1984). In turn, this victim has ... become a new population to treat with individually oriented interventions (Gondolf, 1988, p. 1).

Professionals have contributed to the social construction process by defining battered women in very narrow terms and focusing on specific aspects of their behavior. Professionals (including social workers) see battered women as economically dependent and lacking in self-esteem (Forte et al., 1996; Loseke & Cahill, 1984). They also tend to take great interest in women who choose to stay in their relationships after violence occurs (Gelles, 1976; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Pagelow, 1981; Walker, 1979). Professionals seem to believe that leaving the abusive male is the normatively expected response to the experience of wife assault (Loseke & Cahill, 1984, p. 297). Furthermore, it is believed that leaving is the only way to control the risk of further violence (Baker, 1997; Loseke & Cahill, 1984; Mills, 1996; Peled et al., 2000).

According to Baker (1997), a dominant cultural script has been created that expects battered women to get away and stay away (p. 55). Women who stay are considered deviant, due to their violation of social expectations (Loseke & Cahill, 1984, p. 297). Institutions and professionals respond to this perceived deviancy with approaches that are generally punitive and controlling. Women are expected to leave the abuser or give up the right to services and institutional support. This results in a service response that duplicates and reinforces the patriarchal structure of the family (Kurz, 1993, p. 92).

Linda Mills (1996) argues that battered women must be allowed to define their own reality and needs. In turn, professionals must accept that there is tremendous diversity among battered women and each individual requires above all else time and a fluid institutional response (Mills, 1996, p. 265). This type of response negates socially constructed stereotypes and gives the woman control over her situation, even if she chooses to remain in her current relationship.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented a detailed review of the literature and an outline of the theoretical framework that I will use. My hope is that this project will add to the increasing body of literature that surrounds the social work profession and its response to battered women. In the next chapter, I will outline the methodology that is used in conducting the research.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter will provide a description of the research plan and design. The following areas will be covered: research question, concepts and variables, research design, study population, sample selection, data collection instrument, measurement issues, data analysis, and protection of human subjects. Essentially, this chapter outlines the steps that will be taken in conducting the research for this project.

Research Question

This study intends to answer the following research question: What are the beliefs of social workers in regard to battered women and domestic violence? Comparisons will be made to beliefs that have been found in the literature.

Concepts and Variables

The professional status of social worker constitutes the independent variable. This variable is composed of several sub-variables that will be measured and compared: education, experience, and gender. The dependent variable is beliefs that are associated with domestic violence and its female victims. For the purpose of this study, several core beliefs have been identified through a study of the literature. The data collection instrument is designed to measure this set of beliefs in relation to the independent variable.

Research Design

A survey research design is used to gather descriptive statistics about professional social workers and their beliefs. According to Weinbach and Grinnell (1991), descriptive statistics are used to summarize the characteristics of a sample (p. 12). The characteristics that this study will summarize relate to the beliefs that child protection social workers hold about battered women and domestic violence.

I have used a self-administered, mailed survey to gather quantitative data. Survey research is the preferred method for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population (Babbie, 1983, p. 209). The key strength of survey research is that it can be quantified and used to generalize about a larger population--in this case, the population of social workers in child protection (Rea & Parker, 1992). There are also some potential disadvantages. The data that is gathered can be relatively superficial and can contain some bias, especially with a mailed survey. In this project, however, a survey design is the most sensible and efficient method for gathering and analyzing the desired data.

Study Population

The population that has been studied is professional social workers who work in child protection. Every state in the U.S. employs social workers to assess and intervene in cases of child abuse and neglect. In Wisconsin, every county operates a child protection agency. There are 72 counties in the state; they are divided into six regions. Each region contains both urban and rural areas. It is estimated that there are approximately 350 child protection social workers throughout the state.

Sample Selection

This study uses a nonprobability sampling method. Specifically, the procedure involves purposive sampling. This method was chosen as it seems to be the most sensible, given the goals and parameters of the study. It is also due to the researcher's specific knowledge of this population and its elements. According to Babbie (1983), this is one of the main criteria for choosing a purposive sample.

The sample group is drawn from the North Central Region in Wisconsin. This region is composed of 15 counties. Each county employs one or more workers to perform specific child protection duties. This results in a total of 68 child protection workers

across the region. All of these workers were surveyed for this study.

Each county agency was contacted by phone to gather the names of the child protection workers. Once the names were gathered, surveys were mailed to each worker at their place of employment. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included for return mailing.

Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instrument is a thirty-six item survey that has been specifically developed for this study. It is designed to measure a set of five core beliefs that has been identified through a study of the literature. It also gathers some basic information about the participant's gender, educational level, and experience. Other studies have attempted to gather similar types of information, but they have used mostly qualitative methods. The data that is gathered in this study is strictly quantitative.

The survey (see attachment) is a 36 item scale that measures beliefs about battered women and domestic violence. Each statement is followed by a 4-point set of Likert scale responses, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale is divided into five subscales. Each subscale represents a particular belief that has been identified in the literature. The five beliefs are as follows:

1. Battered women possess certain negative characteristics, such as dependency on men, provocative behavior, mental health problems, a need for violence, and an inability to make healthy choices.
2. Child protection social workers should intervene in domestic violence situations, as there is a high risk for child abuse.
3. Child protection workers should screen for domestic violence in all cases.
4. Couples counseling is an effective intervention in cases of domestic violence

toward women.

5. In order to be safe, battered women must end their relationship with the abusive partner (this should be the focus of social work intervention).

Each of these beliefs is measured by several different statements in the survey. Three other beliefs are also measured by the survey. However, these have not been specifically identified in the literature and they are measured directly using only a single statement.

These are as follows, according to the question number:

#1. Battered women need the some legal protections as battered children.

#10. Violence in an adult relationship is a private matter for the couple.

#27. I believe that violence toward women is a serious social problem.

Thus, the survey is designed to gather descriptive information about the presence of certain beliefs among social workers. These beliefs will be measured, based on the level of agreement with each statement in the survey.

The survey was mailed to individuals at their place of employment. A detailed cover letter was included to explain the study, provide information about confidentiality, and provide basic instructions about completing the survey.

Prior to distribution, the instrument was given to several social workers who have experience in both the child protection and domestic violence fields. After they completed the survey, the researcher obtained feedback about the instrument and incorporated solutions to sentence structure, question clarity, and biased language.

Measurement Issues

The data that is gathered by this survey will be nominal and ordinal. It is essentially an exploratory and descriptive study. The first section of the questionnaire will seek ordinal data: responses that are given on a four-point Likert scale. The second

section seeks nominal data: gender and educational background. Information on years of experience (ratio data) is also requested. In addition, each respondent is asked to estimate the number of battered women that are represented in their caseloads. The measured variables are discrete.

In order to reduce error and increase reliability, the following methods were used:

1. Several questions were included to measure each subscale of the dependent variable.
2. Standardized Likert responses were used for all questions.
3. The self-administered design eliminated potential bias from the researcher and increased the likelihood of honest and accurate responses.
4. In order to improve response rate, the survey was relatively brief and simple to complete.
5. Statements were constructed in a manner which discouraged passive/patterned responses and, therefore, decreased measurement error.

The survey was also been pre-tested with a select group of professionals who have experience working with both child protection and domestic violence cases. The pre-testing process was especially helpful in identifying changes that needed to be made in the wording of certain statements. Pre-testing also assisted in determining whether the concepts were, in fact, being measured in the manner that was intended.

Sixty-seven percent of the region's child protection social workers returned surveys (N=46). Therefore, the results are generalizable to the region. Furthermore, this means that there is no indication of a self-selection bias and reliability should be high.

Data Analysis Procedures

Several different procedures were used to order, analyze and present the data in

this study. The data that was gathered is quantitative. Therefore, general methods of quantitative analysis were used.

Statements in the survey were designed to operationalize the dependent variable. Several statements were provided to measure each of the five core beliefs that have been identified. The data was primarily analyzed by using frequency distributions and percentages.

The data is organized in aggregate form. Tables are used to demonstrate frequency distributions and percentages. Some basic histograms have also been constructed to show visual comparisons.

Protection of Human Subjects

This study has provided for the protection of human subjects. Participation was voluntary and anonymity assured. This was explained fully in the cover letter that accompanied the mailed survey (See Appendix A). Consent was given by the act of returning the survey. Participants were not asked to identify themselves by name or agency. Furthermore, the collection of other identifying data was minimal.

The survey is designed to gather information about the beliefs of professional social workers. This type of information is generally not viewed as sensitive or risk laden. The level of personal intrusion is minimal and participants had very little to gain or lose by participating.

An application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Augsburg College. Approval has been provided; the IRB approval number is 2000-12-2.

Summary

Through this chapter, I have provided an outline of the research design that is used for this study. Issues of measurement and analysis have also been covered. In the

following chapters, I will present the data that has been gathered and outline the relevant findings.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter will present the results of the data gathering process. The characteristics of the population will be outlined and the most relevant findings will be presented. Findings will relate to professional beliefs about the following: stereotypes of battered women; the effectiveness of marital counseling in battering relationships; the role of social work intervention; and the woman's choice to stay in her relationship after abuse occurs.

Characteristics of the Population

Surveys were mailed to all 68 child protection workers in the North Central Region of Wisconsin. The region is composed of 15 counties; the area is primarily rural, but urban areas are also represented. Each county employs child protection social workers. In order to practice as a child protection worker, each individual must be a state certified social worker. A college degree (generally in social work) is the primary requirement for certification.

From the 68 surveys that were mailed, 46 responses were received. This results in a response rate of 67 %. This rate greatly reduces the likelihood of sampling error and allows the results to be generalizable to the region.

The majority of study participants were female (70%). In addition, most participants reported a college degree as the highest level of education (see table 4.1). Twenty-two percent of participants reported having a master's degree. The master-level social workers were split evenly by gender (N=10).

In terms of social work experience, sixty-seven percent have less than 10 years experience (See table 4.1). Twenty percent have more than 21 years of social work experience. Eighty-three percent of the social workers reported having experience working

with battered women. Thus, nearly all study participants have experience working with both abused women and children.

It should be noted that participants have wide range of estimates about the number of battered women represented in their caseloads. On average, social workers estimate that battered women are seen in twenty-two percent of the families they assess. Interestingly, the range of estimates is from 0 to 80% (see table 4.2).

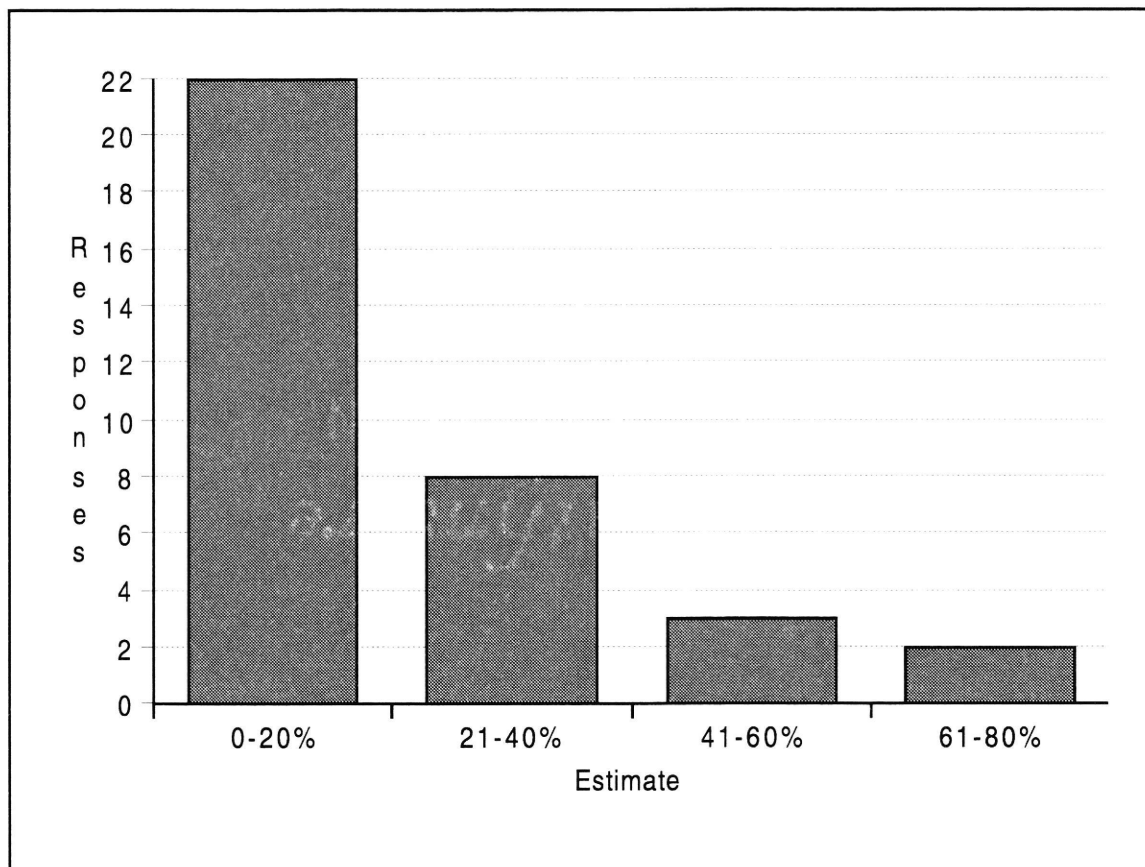
Table 4.1

Characteristics of Participants (N=46)

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Gender:		
Female	32	70
Male	14	30
Education (Highest Degree)		
Bachelor s Degree	36	78
Master s Degree	10	22
Social Work Experience:		
< 10 yrs.	31	67
11-20 yrs.	6	13
> 21 yrs.	9	20

Graph 4.1

Estimates of the number of battered women in each worker's caseload (N=46)



Stereotyping of Battered Women

Prior studies have shown that social workers tend to hold negative stereotypes regarding battered women (Davis, 1984; Harway & Hansen, 1993; Loseke & Cahill, 1984; Ross & Glisson, 1991). The results of this study are mixed. In regard to negative stereotypes, it appears that social workers still see battered women as being economically dependent, needing mental health treatment, and possessing poor decision-making skills. Specifically, 76% of the study population believes that most battered women rely on men for financial support. Eighty-seven percent believe that battered women need treatment and 64% believe that battered women are not able to make reasonable decisions about their safety (see table 4.2).

Other negative stereotypes have been strongly rejected by social workers. These include ideas about battered women being provocative, masochistic and deserving equal blame for the violence they experience. The overwhelming majority of social workers do not believe that these characteristics are accurate. For example, only 9% believe that battered women provoke their partners into violence. Also, only 9% agree with the idea that battered women share responsibility for the violence they experience. A slightly higher number, 17%, agree with the statement that most battered women choose to have abusive partners (see table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Level of Agreement with Negative Stereotypes (N=46)

<u>Stereotype:</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Need treatment	40	87
Economically dependent	33	76
Unable to make reasonable decisions about safety	29	64
Choose abusive partners	8	17
Provocative	4	09
Share responsibility for the violence	4	09

The Effectiveness of Marital Counseling in Battering Relationships

The second set of beliefs measured by this study involves the effectiveness of marital counseling in domestic violence cases. In the past, social workers have been criticized for recommending marital therapy when it may, in fact, be contraindicated (Golden & Frank, 1994).

The results of this study reveal that child protection workers do not believe in the value of marital counseling for battered women and their partners. Three survey statements were used to measure this subscale of the dependent variable and all showed significant disagreement with this belief. On average, eighty-three percent of social workers disagree with the belief that couples counseling is an effective intervention for battered women. This demonstrates a noteworthy change from Davis (1984) finding that about thirty percent of family service social workers recommend couples counseling in cases of woman battering.

Social Work Intervention

A third area measured by the survey involves beliefs about the need for social work intervention. Some scholars have contended that child protection workers are only interested in the best interest of the child (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996; Magan et al., 1995). Therefore, the argument is made that they tend to ignore violence toward women, as they do not see it as fitting into their professional role.

The survey revealed several key findings regarding social work intervention. First, the majority (65%) of social workers agree that social workers have a responsibility to assess for domestic violence in all client families. Second, an overwhelming majority believe that domestic violence is a serious social problem (96%) that requires more attention from the profession (87%). In fact, sixty-seven percent of social workers in the

region believe that battered women need the same legal protections as battered children (see table 4.3).

Social workers appear to have a firm understanding of the connection between child abuse and woman abuse. Most (85%) agree with the statement that men who batter their wives are likely to abuse their children. Moreover, most (70%) reject the notion that child protection workers should **not** intervene in domestic violence cases unless children are physically harmed (see graph 4.1).

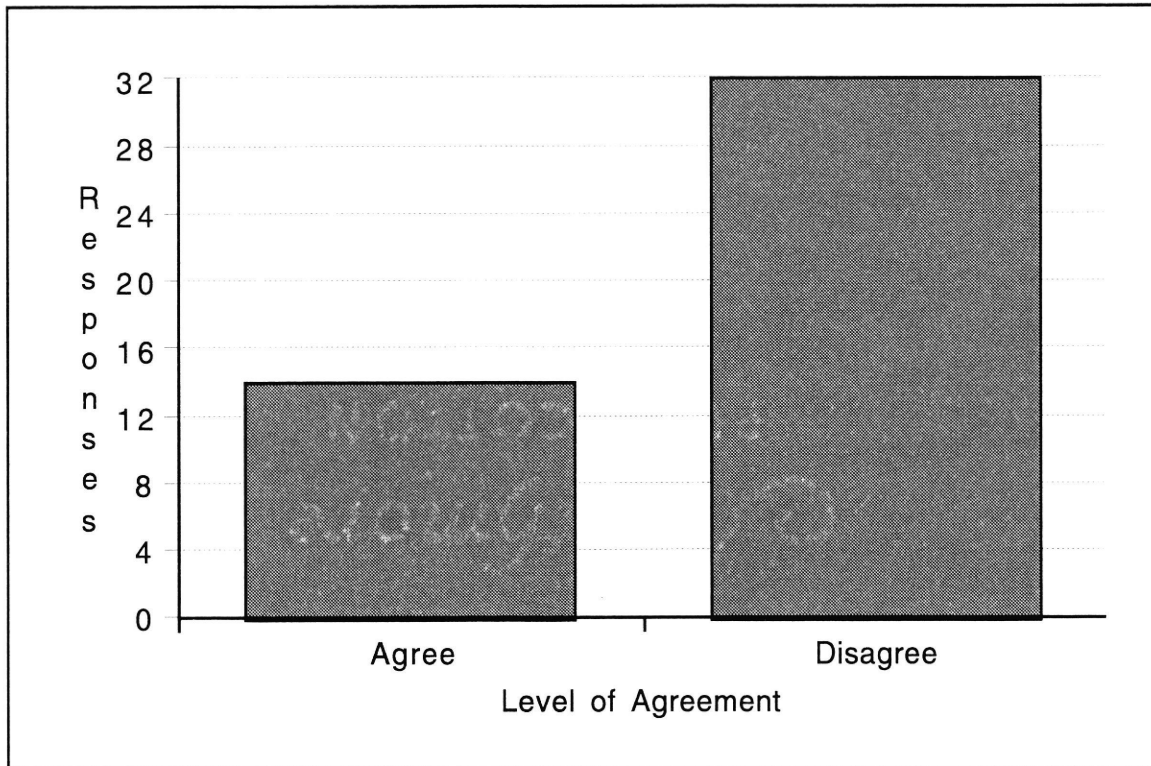
Table 4.3

Beliefs About Social Work Intervention With Battered Women (N=46)

<u>Belief:</u>	Level of Agreement	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
1. Domestic violence is a serious social problem	44	96
2. As a profession, we need to focus more attention on the problem of domestic violence.	40	89
3. Battered women need the same legal protections as battered children.	31	67
4. Social workers have a responsibility to assess for domestic violence in all client families.	30	65

Graph 4.2

Belief: Child protection workers should not intervene in domestic violence situations unless children are physically harmed.



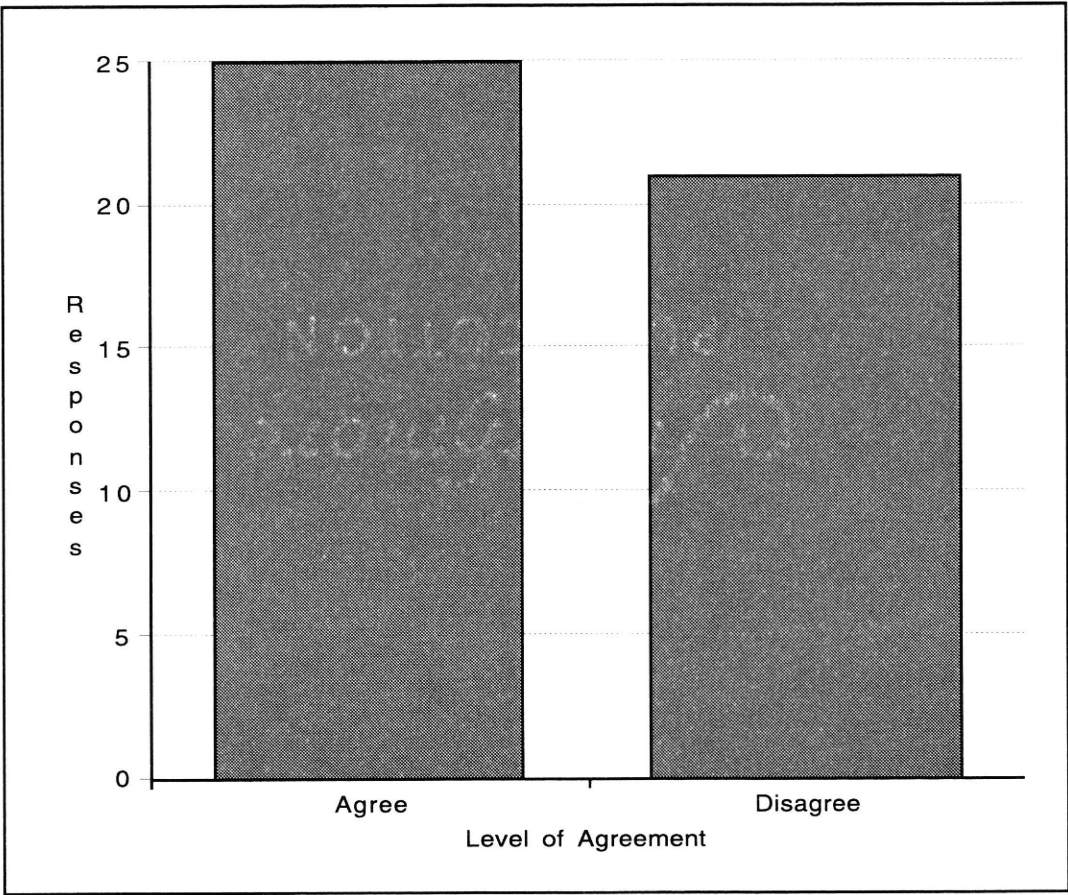
The Choice to Stay

The final belief system that is measured by this survey relates to the battered woman's decision to remain in a relationship after abuse has occurred. In regard to this belief, social workers have been criticized from two sides. Some see them as ignoring the abuse; others see them as placing too much emphasis on the perceived need for battered women to leave abusive relationships. A portion of the survey was designed to explore the current position of social workers in this area.

First, the findings reveal a general acceptance (78%) that battered women have valid reasons for remaining in an abusive relationship. Second, almost all social workers agree that battered women deserve professional support, even if they decide to stay in the abusive relationship (96%). However, beyond these basic premises, the results are somewhat inconsistent. For example, eighty-two percent disagree with the statement that social workers cannot help battered women unless they are willing to leave the abusive relationship. But, eighty-two percent also believe that we should provide services that help women leave abusive relationships. Furthermore, social workers are closely divided in regard to the following survey statement: If a battered woman wants to be safe from abuse, she needs to end the relationship (see graph 4.2). Therefore, it appears that there is some disagreement among social workers regarding a battered woman's decision to stay.

Graph 4.3

Belief: If a battered woman wants to be safe from abuse, she needs to end the relationship



DISCUSSION

This chapter offers a summary discussion about the key findings of this study. Findings are grouped into three categories: stereotypes, social work intervention, and the choice to stay. Other areas are also addressed, such as the strengths and limitations of the study, and implications for social work practice and research.

Key Findings

Through this project, I have attempted to determine some of the beliefs of child protection social workers in regard to battered women and domestic violence. Further, I have attempted to compare these beliefs to those found in other studies. This type of comparison allows us to look at progress and change in the profession over time. My hope was that with time and improved training, social workers have become more knowledgeable about the reality of domestic violence and more sensitive to the multiple needs of battered women. The data that has been gathered by this study shows that some gains have been made. However, there are still some areas where ongoing training is necessary.

Stereotypes

The results of this study indicate that social workers have become less stereotypical of battered women. This is especially evident in making comparisons to the findings of Ross and Glisson (1991), Walker (1981), and Davis (1987). These scholars found that social workers tend to view battered women as being provocative, masochistic and domineering. In turn, social workers were more likely to blame women for the abuse they experience. The data in this study contradicts such findings. As shown in table 4.2, the overwhelming majority of social workers in this study disagree with these stereotypes. Therefore, it is safe to say that social workers understand that it is the

violent man (not the battered woman) who should be held accountable for the abuse.

On the negative side, some stereotypes continue to exist among child protection workers. First, it is evident that social workers continue to believe that battered women are economically dependent. In fact, I found that seventy-six percent of the individuals in this study agreed with this belief. This occurs, despite the fact that there is simply no strong empirical evidence to support it (Loseke & Cahill, 1984). The notion of economic dependence is socially constructed and simply part of the false notion that battered women are victims with no self-determination or power.

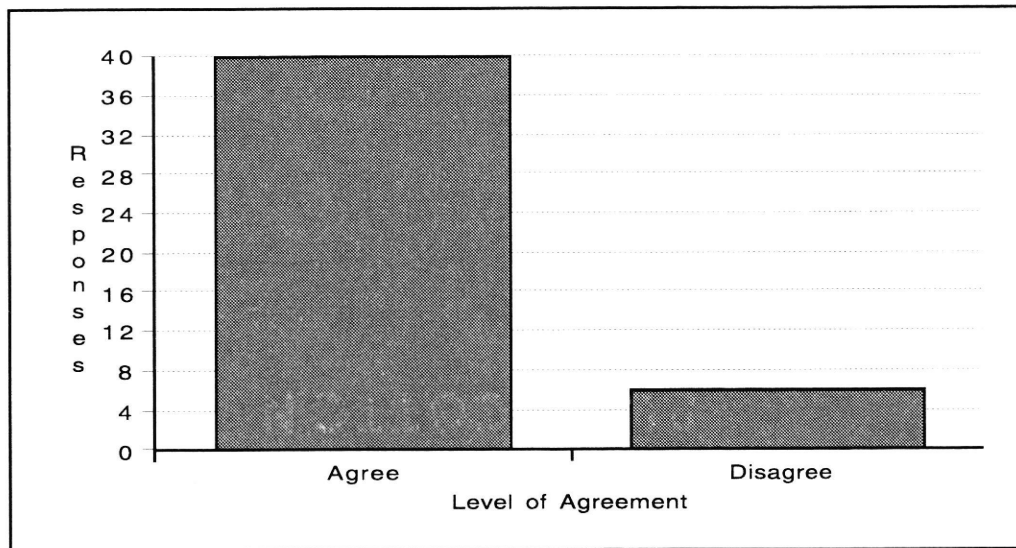
Another stereotype that persists is the belief that battered women need mental health treatment. This stereotype is problematic, as it is one way in which professionals blame women for the abuse (Davis, 1987; Gondolf, 1988). If a person needs treatment, it usually implies that they have some type of deficiency or behavior that requires change. Feminist theory rejects the notion that it is the woman who needs to change (Davis & Hagan, 1992; Nichols, 1976). Treatment-based intervention should be focused on the batterer, not the survivor. Battered women often need intervention, but it is needed in the form of practical services rather than psychiatric treatment (Davis & Hagan, 1992; Schuyler, 1976).

In terms of treatment interventions, one other finding is interesting. While most respondents believe that battered women need professional counseling, almost an equal number disagree that battered women should engage in couples counseling with their partner (see graph 5.1). This finding appears somewhat questionable, but it may simply reflect an increased understanding that marriage counseling can place the woman at higher risk of abuse (Golden & Frank, 1994).

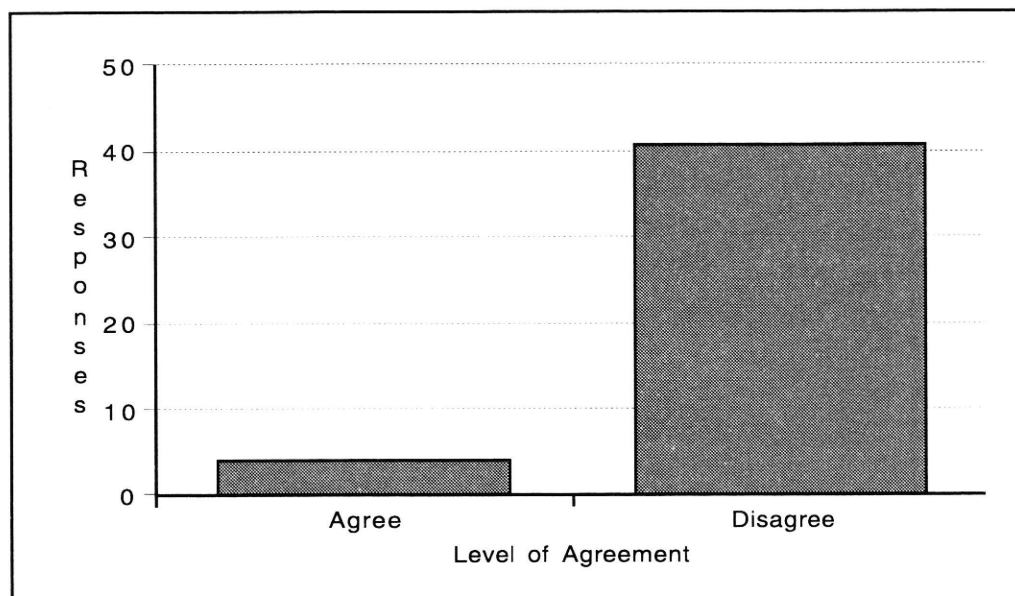
Graph 5.1

Comparison of beliefs regarding counseling

Belief: Most battered women need treatment through some type of professional counseling.



Belief: Marriage counseling is the best intervention for couples who have a violent relationship.



Finally, there is a continuing belief that battered women are not capable of making healthy decisions about their safety. This is evidenced by an agreement level of 64%. Again, this is an idea that has been socially constructed, without empirical basis. The fact that this belief exists supports some of the criticisms aimed at child protection workers. For example, Schechter and Edleson (1994) contend that child protection workers often do not trust battered women to provide safety for their children. As a result, child protection workers are more likely to remove children from the care of battered mothers (Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). Based on the level of agreement seen in this study, it appears that child protection workers do not trust battered women when addressing concerns of child safety. Certainly, if social workers do not believe that battered women can make healthy decisions about their own safety, it is likely that they do not expect them to make good decisions about the safety of their children (Beeman, Hagemeister & Edleson, 1999; Davis, 1995).

Thus, the ongoing presence of certain stereotypes should be a focal point of social work education and training. A study by Magan and Conroy (1998) found positive results when child protection workers were trained specifically about battered women and domestic violence. The training was found to decrease negative perceptions about battered women and increase the level of awareness about the needs of battered women who are seen in the context of child protective services.

Social Work Intervention

We know from the literature that child protection workers frequently come in contact with battered women. Studies reveal that in cases of child abuse, 30 to 60% of the families also experience violence toward women (Edleson, 1999; Magen et al., 1995). Thus, we know that abuse toward women is a strong predictor of child abuse (Petchers,

1995; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). Therefore, there is a sound basis for the argument that child protection workers should be aware of domestic violence issues and willing to intervene for the protection of both women and children.

Several authors contend that child protection workers are only interested in the safety needs of children (Beeman et al., 1999; Hess, Folaron & Jefferson, 1992; Magen et al., 1997). If this is true, we would expect social workers to believe that children are more vulnerable and require special legal protections. In addition, we would expect these workers to reject the notion that they should be assessing for woman abuse in cases of abuse toward children.

My findings suggest that this is not the case. First, 67% of respondents agree that battered women need the same legal protections as battered children. Second, the majority believe that child protection workers should intervene in domestic violence cases, even if children are not physically abused (refer to graph 4.3). Finally, most respondents believe that social workers have a responsibility to assess for domestic violence in all client families (65%). In addition, almost all social workers agree that the profession should focus more attention on the problem of domestic violence (refer to table 4.3).

Thus, the social workers in this study seem to agree that they have a role in working with battered women and assessing for domestic violence. Consequently, this study negates the idea that CPS workers are only concerned about the interests of children. I think this is especially evident in the belief about legal protections. Frankly, it is somewhat surprising that child protection workers believe that battered women should have the same legal protections as battered children. This demonstrates a strong sense of concern for battered women and a belief that the safety needs of women are important.

One other finding is noteworthy. The participants in this study were asked to estimate the percentage of battered women in their individual caseloads. The responses revealed a wide range of estimates from 0 to 80%. The mean response was 22% (mean=20%), indicating that social workers may underestimate the number of battered women they encounter. This is another area that could be adequately covered in training. Magen and his associates (1995) found that when social workers were trained to screen for domestic violence, they were able to identify many more cases of abuse toward women.

The Choice to Stay

One of the most controversial issues in the domestic violence literature involves the woman's decision to remain in an abusive relationship. In the 1970s and 1980s, most scholars seemed to believe that the primary professional role was to help battered women leave the abuser (Bass & Rice, 1979; Davis & Carlson, 1981; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Nichols, 1976; Pagelow, 1981). More recently, an increasing body of literature is questioning this approach, stating that battered women should be empowered to make their own decisions, regardless of professional expectations (Baker, 1997; Mills, 1996; Peled et al., 2000). The members of this group point out that battered women face complex priorities (Baker, p. 73) and deep uncertainty (Mills, p. 172) in their relationships. As a result, human service professionals should allow them to have adequate time and a fluid institutional response (Mills, p. 172). Furthermore, professionals should continue to offer support, whether the woman chooses to leave or not (Loseke & Cahill, 1984).

In this study, I have found generally positive results concerning the issue of staying. Based on the data, social workers understand that battered women may have

valid reasons for remaining in an abusive relationship. They also believe that professional support should continue, regardless of a woman's choice to stay with the abuser. Moreover, most respondents disagree with the belief that social workers cannot help battered women unless they are willing to leave the abusive relationship.

Although these results appear positive, there are two beliefs that show some inconsistency. First, eighty-two percent of the respondents believe that social workers should provide services that help women leave abusive relationships. Of course, this may indicate that they are simply flexible, in the manner suggested by Mills (1996). It could also mean that they are willing to provide this type of service if it is requested by the woman.

Second, social workers are closely divided in regard to the belief that battered women must end the relationship in order to be safe (refer to graph 4.3). Overall, I think this finding is a direct reflection of the controversy around this issue. It also indicates that the social work profession has not provided consistent education and training. As a result, each practitioner is forced to make his or her own determinations, based on experience and personal bias.

In summary, this is another area in which training could be beneficial. Social workers should be educated about the need for open and flexible responses to battered women. This would bring the profession in line with Mills (1996) recommendation that social service agencies offer an environment in which battered women can explore all of their options.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

As opposed to many survey projects, this study had an especially strong response rate (67%). This increases the reliability of the study. It also allows for the

results to be generalizable to the region being studied. Thus, we have a strong understanding about the beliefs of child protection workers in north central Wisconsin.

The primary limitation of the study is found in the survey design. The survey instrument was standardized and relatively brief. Therefore, it did not allow for significant depth. However, it is likely that these same factors contributed to the high response rate. With this in mind, it seems to be a fair trade-off.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Research

In terms of social work practice, I have been able to identify several areas where ongoing training and education are necessary. First, social workers need to develop a more accurate understanding of domestic violence as a social problem rather than an individual problem. Second, they should be educated about the stereotypes that falsely label battered women as dependent, irresponsible, and deficient. Third, they should be trained to assess for woman battering (in the CPS context) and be prepared to confront the problem in a manner that is flexible and supportive.

As for future research, this study has generated several ideas. First, it would be beneficial to conduct a follow-up study that compares beliefs to actions. Using the beliefs found in this study, the same group of respondents could be interviewed about their actual practices with cases of domestic violence. This could help us determine if beliefs translate into action in the professional realm.

Second, a more in-depth study should be conducted. Perhaps a qualitative method could be used to flesh out the general beliefs that have been tested here. Based on the response rate from this region, it is likely that an adequate sample could be achieved again.

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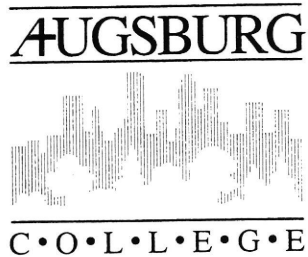
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MEMO

2 June 2000

To: Mr. Tim Moe

From: Dr. Sharon Patten, IRB Chair
Phone: 612-330-1723

SKP

RE: Your IRB Application

Thank you for your response to IRB issues and questions. As we discussed over the phone earlier this year, your study was approved (IRB approval number 2000-12-1). Please use this number on all official correspondence and written materials relative to your study.

Your research should prove valuable and provide important insight into an issue in social work practice, planning, and policy. We wish you every success!

SKP:ka

cc: Dr. Mike Schock, Thesis Advisor

Appendix B

March 14, 2000

Consent Letter

Master s Thesis: The Social Work Response to Domestic Violence

You are invited to contribute to a study of the social work response to domestic violence. You were selected as a participant because of your job as a county Social Worker. The purpose of the study is to learn something about how professional Social Workers view domestic violence and their role (if any) in dealing with it. I am conducting this study as part of my Master of Social Work thesis at Augsburg College.

Procedures:

Participation in the study involves two simple steps:

1. Completion of the 36-item survey that is enclosed.
2. Returning the survey in the stamped envelope that is provided.

This process should only take about 10 to 15 minutes of your time.

Confidentiality:

You will **not** be asked to identify yourself by name or agency. Therefore, your privacy is maintained. Furthermore, your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Consent and participation simply means that you complete the survey and return it in the enclosed envelope. In order to increase the accuracy of the study, I am hoping for a high response rate.

Your willingness to complete the survey is very appreciated.

There are no identified risks or benefits associated with participating in the study. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with Augsburg College.

Contacts and Questions:

This study is being conducted by Tim Moe. I am a certified social worker, currently working in Taylor County. If you have questions about the study or survey, please feel free to call me at 715-748-3332. My advisor is Mike Schock, MSW, Ph.D. He can be reached at 612-330-1725.

Appendix C

Survey:

Please circle only one answer in response to each statement

	Strongly <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	Strongly <u>Disagree</u>
1. Battered women need the same legal protections as battered children.	4	3	2	1
2. It is not part of my job to be concerned about battered women.	4	3	2	1
3. We should provide support to battered women, even if they decide to stay in the abusive relationship.	4	3	2	1
4. I have encountered very few battered women in my work.	4	3	2	1
5. I think most battered women share equal responsibility for the violence they experience.	4	3	2	1
6. I believe that most battered women can make reasonable decisions about their safety.	4	3	2	1
7. A battered woman may have valid reasons for remaining in an abusive relationship.	4	3	2	1
8. I believe social workers are properly trained to identify both child abuse and spousal violence.	4	3	2	1
9. Child protection workers should not intervene in domestic violence cases unless children are physically harmed.	4	3	2	1
10. Violence in an adult relationship is a private matter for the couple.	4	3	2	1
11. Men who batter their wives are likely to physically abuse their children.	4	3	2	1
12. Marriage counseling is the best intervention for couples who have a violent relationship.	4	3	2	1

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
13. Social workers have a responsibility to assess for domestic violence in all client families.	4	3	2	1
14. The children of battered women are at a high level of risk for abuse.	4	3	2	1
15. We should provide services that help women leave abusive relationships.	4	3	2	1
16. As a profession, we need to focus more attention on the problem of domestic violence.	4	3	2	1
17. Most battered women need treatment through some type of professional counseling.	4	3	2	1
18. Just because a woman is abused, we cannot assume that her children will also be harmed.	4	3	2	1
19. Couples counseling is the best intervention for stopping violence toward women in a relationship.	4	3	2	1
20. I believe that battered women often provoke violence from their partner.	4	3	2	1
21. If a battered woman wants to be safe from abuse, she needs to end the relationship.	4	3	2	1
22. I believe that most battered women choose to have abusive partners.	4	3	2	1
23. Most battered women rely on men for financial support.	4	3	2	1
24. I don t think we can help battered women unless they are willing to leave the abuser.	4	3	2	1
25. Marriage counseling is not an effective intervention for domestic violence.	4	3	2	1
26. Even if they leave, I expect that most battered women will return to the abusive relationship.	4	3	2	1

	Strongly <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	Strongly <u>Disagree</u>
27. I believe that violence toward women is a serious social problem.	4	3	2	1
28. I believe that domestic violence and child abuse are closely related problems.	4	3	2	1
29. Child protection social workers should only focus on abuse toward children.	4	3	2	1
30. I can think of no reason why a woman would stay in an abusive relationship.	4	3	2	1

General Information (please fill in the appropriate boxes below):

Gender:

- ☐ Female
☐ Male

Educational Level:

- ☐ College Degree
☐ Master s Degree

How long have you worked as a social worker?

_____ years _____ months

Do you have experience working with battered women?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

In your estimate, what percentage of your cases involve battered women?

_____ %

Does your current job involve child protection duties?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Augsburg College
Lindell Library
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